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FROM : Amembassy GUATEMALA

DATE: October 19, 1966

SUBJECT: Monthly Guerrilla Report-September

DEPARTMENT OF STATE A/CDC/ML

REF : A-131, September 24, 1966

REVIEWED BY ECJ DATE 3 OCT 1966

PORTIONS DENIED AS INDICATED

1. September was the month for Rightist activity, while the extreme Left remained relatively subdued, and even offered a certain uneasy truce (on its terms) to the GOG, elements of the extreme Right devoted their energies to plotting and trying to obtain enough support in the military to overthrow the GOG and install itself in power. Fortunately, as the month drew to a close, it was evident that at least for the time being, the extreme Right lacked the resources or support to mount a successful golpe de estado though their efforts kept things stirred up.

President Addresses Nation

2. Concern over the internal security situation, and pressure from many elements on the GOG to present a more forceful image, resulted in a Presidential address to the nation on September 7. President Julio Cesar Mendez Montenegro stressed in his speech that he had made every effort to bring peace to Guatemala, but that extremists were not responding and were continuing to cause trouble (see GUATEMALA 1265 and A-106 for text of speech). As a result, he warned, he was prepared to take whatever counter-measures necessary to combat the extremists, and had so advised his armed forces.

Enclosure:

El Guerrillero of
August, 1966 (1)FORM
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4. His speech received replies from both extremes (A-114). The Left said it would never give up its revolutionary struggle, and reiterated its usual position and arguments that the GOG was controlled by the military and that it was not undertaking the necessary reforms. However, it did state that it would be willing to give up its "military-type" activities if in return the GOG armed forces suspended military operations against them and "against the people." This position was quickly attacked by various newspaper columnists, who pointed out that there was little sense in a suspension of military activity while the Fuerzas Armadas Rebeldes (FAR) and the Communist Party went ahead organizing, continuing selective eliminations, and strengthening themselves. In any event, the extreme Left did withdraw considerably and few terrorist or other actions could be attributed to them during the month of September.

5. The extreme Right replied to the speech by saying it hoped the President's words would be followed by action. It implied that the GOG was not really interested in pursuing the extreme Left and that the latter actually did not have to fight, since for all intents and purposes it already controlled the GOG through the Partido Revolucionario (PR). However, it did insist that its opposition remained within a legal framework. During most of these exchanges, the spokesman for the Right was the Movimiento de Liberación Nacional (MLN).

6. There followed a brief diversionary exchange directly between the FAR and the MLN. The former accused the latter of plotting the overthrow of the GOG, and the MLN countered by blasting the FAR as a group of bandits and deceitful individuals representing no one but themselves. This exchange failed to produce any positive result, but at least it identified the primary contestants in extremism.

Other Extremist Activity

7. A new Rightist terrorist organization emerged during the month. Calling itself CRAG, it said its duty was to fight the extreme Left. Following its words with action, a number of known Leftists received threats, and a number of bombs were exploded in Guatemala City. While so far no personal injuries have resulted and little material damage was incurred, CRAG and other Rightist terrorist organizations have served notice that they mean business. The MLN also announced the formation of an Anti-Communist Front (FUA), but several political parties (PID and DCG) immediately denied participation. FUA, therefore, emerged as a loose grouping of pro-MLN factions and not much else.

8. However, the most serious danger to the stability of the present GOG occurred towards the end of the month. B1
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reported that the MLN,

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in conjunction with certain Army officers [REDACTED] was plotting to overthrow the Mendez Government on grounds that it was not effective in combatting communism. It soon became apparent, however, that the plot stories were based on an exaggerated estimate of the degree of the Army High Commands' distress or complicity in the plotting. It was also clear that there was little popular support for any such move in the country at large. Consequently, no serious plot was able to gain momentum. [REDACTED]

The Extreme Left

9. Perhaps the most significant move during September was the growing evidence that the FAR and the Movimiento Revolucionario del 13 de Noviembre (MR-13) were reported to be coming together again. The latter issued a report of conversations between the two organizations (copy attached) and indicated that brotherhood and friendship had reigned at that meeting. While the MR-13 remains a relatively weak and ineffectual organization, its former hostility to the FAR served to weaken the over-all extreme left effort; its cooperation and friendship will strengthen it. Although it remains uncertain just how far this rapprochement has gone, it appears increasingly certain that efforts are being made to that end.

10. The FAR also took to the pen during the month. Besides the above-mentioned exchanges with the MLN, and the issuance of a number of bulletins explaining its views, it also undertook a dialogue with Isidoro Zarco, a columnist in the local newspaper Prensa Libre (A-79 and A-122). Again these were not terribly significant exchanges and no new departures or policies were noted. However, they did reveal aggressive propaganda, and only accentuated rightist fears that the GOG was letting the extreme left do as it pleased. Additionally, several extreme leftist publications began to appear with regularity on the streets of Guatemala City; these include El Estudiante (subsequently the object of a CRAG bomb) and Opinión Revolucionaria, "newspapers" with long, erratic histories of subversive propaganda.

Juridical Congress

11. Guatemala's Fourth Juridical Congress took place during the month of September and further aroused the suspicions of the Right. Unfortunately, neither the Right nor the GOG participated in it with any sort of force. As a result, Marxist elements quickly took charge of it and with no real opposition being encountered, successfully passed a number of resolutions quite damaging to the present Government. The most serious of these was the charge that the present Constitution was illegal and that a new Constituent Assembly should be convened. This served only to encourage the Right in its thoughts that the overthrow of the present Government was justifiable. Some observers felt that this was exactly what the Marxists hoped would happen, since their ultimate objectives were better served by a rightist dictatorship than by a democratic Government.

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Terrorist Acts

12. There were few terrorist acts during the month of September, and although the Army initiated a series of "sweeps" of the guerrilla areas in Izabal and Zacapa, even it failed to encounter much action. A gasoline truck belonging to Texaco was machinegunned in San Marcos, but little damage resulted and there were no injuries. The Mexican Government discovered an arms smuggling ring which implicated several Guatemalan Communists in exile as well as members of the Soviet and Cuban Embassies in Mexico City. A quantity of arms and other equipment were captured at the border.

13. While the FAR had released its long-held prisoners Baltazar Morales and Augusto de León at the end of August, it was revealed in September that the GOG released at about the same time José María Ortiz Vides, a FAR member and killer who had been captured by the police several months earlier. B-1
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14. Several bombs, attributable to rightists, exploded harmlessly on September 29 and 30. Also, two bombs exploded equally harmlessly on September 7, following President Mendez' speech. A day earlier, PR headquarters were shot at, but again there was no damage.

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